

(9)

The Breuyate and shorte  
Tragycall hystorie of the fayre  
Custance, the Emperours  
doughter of Rome.

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Richard Pynson, London.

A fragment of eight leaves, comprising four leaves (out of eight?) of Sig.E and the whole of Sig.F, of an edition of an apparently unknown poem by an apparently unknown author.

The poem follows very closely the text of the tale of Custance in The Man of Laws Tale. The author's name is revealed at the end in "Lenuoy of Thomas Allsoppe."



Alsoppe, Thomas. [F<sup>4</sup>] Thus endeth the Breuyate  
and short Tragycall hystorie, of the fayre Custance,  
the Emperours daughter of Rome. London, R. Pynson,  
[15?].

Eight leaf fragment (E<sup>1</sup>-2, E<sup>5</sup>-6, F<sup>1</sup>-4). [Complete  
copy probably consisted of 26 leaves (A<sup>2</sup>, B<sup>4</sup>, C<sup>6</sup>, D<sup>4</sup>, E<sup>6</sup>, F<sup>4</sup>)  
with B<sup>1</sup>-F<sup>3</sup> foliated i-xxiii]



[illegible]

nod. So you full was the kyng / replete is wo & payne  
 When he the letter red / but yet his inwardde foze  
 He wolde camd in / howe / but hezily wzor agayne  
 Sayeng / welcōe the comē of Chant / for euer more  
 To me a wzeche / whiche with newe letnes / thy foze  
 Welcōe thy grate good to do / thy tpyng & plesaunce  
 My hert & will / I put / vnfo thyne oꝝpchaunce.

He percyghewell my chylder albe it soules paye  
 And the my lousyng wife/ vntyll my hounse comyng  
 Whill whan by myght/ may sende me such a synnyng  
 Whiche hathe moche paye/ And so for o' pleasyng  
 This letter he sealed/ full bytterly wepyng  
 And to the messanger/ he dyde it soone conuey  
 His leue he taketh/ and forth he rode his way

O beestly messenger / fulfilled with brokenesse  
 Strag is thy brethe / thy lymmes disceue the aye  
 Thou doest discover / counsaile and secretnesse  
 Thy bryght is troubled / thou langlest as a Jave  
 Thou tourneest up to downe / alleheng out of array  
 For where as dyuinitie bothe dwelle / in any rout  
 No counsaile there is kept / but it at last must out.  
 Custa. Cursed



O cursed Donegilde / thou hast brought this blame  
 Thy malice to the death of the noble knight  
 Wherfore to the devil thou shalt be assigned  
 Let hym indite and charge the wretched & false enuy  
 O deuillist he woman / for on thy trechery  
 Thou came of Judas kyn / for this I dare say well  
 Though here in earth thou waldest / thy spirite is in hell.

In meane while her letters were / stolen ouer the hon  
 And other letters made / which said in this mynere  
 The kynge commaundeth / that she be put to deeth  
 On payne of hanging / by law and by iustice  
 He shulde nat suffer / that a woman was precise  
 Custaunce in his coloure / no longer to abyde  
 But into the daye ende / so oughte I might betyde

But in the same shipp comber in / as he her founde  
 She and her yong son / with such a nedefull weie  
 Alone he shulde her put / and thus he was hold  
 In charge on payne of deeth / if he no more coethere  
 O dissolute Custaunce / in hart wel mayst thou fere  
 And slepe vnquietly / awaiting thy penance  
 When Donegilde for the / hath made such ordynace

Howe the wofull Custaunce / with her lytell son  
 Maurice by the cursed trayson of Donegilde / was  
 Let agayne in to the same shippe wher in she  
 came the day / and so went fletyng vpon  
 the see at her aduenture / and  
 of her pynous complaint  
 Cap. The





When mynnyng was in the maner of a booke  
 Unto the adell he cometh in a booke  
 And the adell the letter for the he toke  
 Which sayng puerous was made by a disinat  
 So straitly written full ofte (alas he said)  
 This felle bitter word how may it long endure  
 Sithe so dutifully he to the creature.

O Christ of heuyn if that it be thy wyll  
 As thou arte equal iudge: alas howe may this be  
 That thou dost suffer the innocentes to spyll  
 And woked folke to dye in great prosperite  
 Alas good Custance that wo is made for the  
 Sithe if thy turnerout must be: or therfore dye  
 Al hamfull be the fle: none other remedy.

Full tenderly wepte all they which in the place  
 For ruth: when the kyng this cruel letter sent  
 And harte tale to make with pale and deebly face  
 Custance at the last: towarde the shippe is went  
 There was non other mean: but yet in good entent  
 The wyll of Crist he toke: & knelyng by the steepe  
 Welcome good lorde he said: be vnto me thy sonne

He the whiche me kept: from all the oyme & blame  
 While I vpon the lade: haue bydden here with you  
 He can me saue also: from perill harne and shame  
 Vpon the salt see: allthough pefenat howe  
 As strong as euer he was: right so he is yet now  
 In him is all my trust: and in his mother deede  
 Whiche I haue vnto me: my mast my sayle and stee  
 Custa. E. ii. Her



Her lytell myghte childe / lay weping in her arms  
 Of motherly pitey / she bare it full of care  
 Peace now my childe / for none shall do the harme  
 When with her kercher / of frowe her heed she brand  
 And ouer his face / anone the same she layd  
 And in her armes / she rocked hym full fast  
 And towards heuyn / her eyes vp she cast

Mylde mother of the / and blessed mayde Mary  
 Sothe it is / that by a womans entycement  
 Mankynde was forlorne / and dampned for to dye  
 Whom to redeme / thy childe / on the crosse was rent  
 Thou lady with thyn eyes / sawe all his tourment  
 Than: no comparison certesse / there is bytwene  
 Thy sorowes / of all / that euer hath ben sene

Thy childe þe sawe slayne / before thyn eynes  
 And yett nowe lyueth my lytell childe alway  
 Howe blessed lady / to whom all creatures crye  
 The well of womanheed / mother and mayden aye  
 Thou hauen of refuge / the bright starre of the day  
 Upon my childe and me / in this our harde distresse  
 Haue thou compassion / of thy great goodnesse

O lytell tendre babe : alas what is thy gyfte  
 Thou neuer yett wrought / no maner syn parde  
 Thy cruell father / why wyll he haue the spylte  
 Of mercy dere kepar / and tendre loue quod she  
 Wytsafe my lytell childe / maye crye here with me  
 If hym thou dare nat saue / fro perishing & blame  
 yett ones wytsaue / to kysse hym / in his fathers name  
 With



3

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Other brief cases, 1914-15

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The xiiii.

Rome he brought her / straight into his toyle  
ere she right well was kept / & her pong son also  
With this Senatour / she ladde a merry lyfe  
hus hath our lady / brought forth of care and  
traunce / lyke as she hath done / many other  
o long tyme she dwelled in Rome / w<sup>th</sup> rest & p<sup>er</sup>fect  
eternous weyles / and parfite holynesse.

Senatours wife / her aunt finally was  
w<sup>th</sup> natwithstanding / she knewe her neuer y<sup>e</sup> more  
onger tary / I wyll / as in this case  
Kynge Alba / of whom I spake before  
his wife wept / w<sup>th</sup> sighing lere  
rain  
all Custance  
unce.

He cāe to Rome  
by the noble se  
e toke with hi dyuers ty  
grice / the son of Custance  
ynges fest: & how the kynge by  
it remēbred his wife Custance / at  
whose syluany the kynge marueled. Cap. xiiii.

Kynge Alba y<sup>e</sup> which / his moder thus had slayde  
By gre<sup>e</sup> remorse of hert / & inward repentance  
Toke a g<sup>re</sup> displeasure / that to be shorte & playne  
To Rome he cāe / for to receyue penance  
And as the pope wolde / to byde his ordynance  
As he shulde hyra enapne / & Jesu Christ belonge  
His syns to forgyue / wherein he had mis wrought.

The









'Tis not for such the world doth count the day  
 Goodly, yet in the sight of all my life I shall  
 have not a new one nor shall I ever see  
 Of such like more, and so I may be not wise  
 As she that is so young to dye upon a heifer  
 Than sensual she that is so young to dye  
 In her all time is dead, and she that is so young

This child of fauour / resembled much the Countesse  
As lyke as possible / a creature might be / of such beaute  
Kyrng Alba the face / had in his remembrance  
Of noble Custaunce / and there named he / of one  
Conceyving / under the childes mother were the  
Which was his spouse and wife / appoynted he  
And from the table he fedde / all he might /

That shee must die. I haue a diuine blessing  
 That well ought to me after rightfull iudgement  
 That long cannot be wife. in the same seas deep  
 And after a while he tounred his argument  
 Saying: why may nat Christ, whiche is omnipotent  
 Kepe her now from dethe, as he hath done before  
 For whom he left to saue, I shall neuer be forlore.

It is as possible that I be brought  
Preserued from harme of stormes tempestuous  
With the might of power that made all of nought  
As well as I be before on set most perillous  
Was to our countre safe (can we not but  
What god might have done) who shap the course of life  
It is the to do of all he may do what he list





¶ Howe kynge Alba had knowledge of his faith/  
full spouse Custaunce/ and of their joye  
ouse metyng. Cap. xv.

¶ At long tyme after/ home with the senatour  
went Alba on a day/ to se this wonders chaunce  
The senatour made/ to Alba great honour  
And hastily he sent/ after the fayre Custaunce:  
Well ye may suppose/ she lyst nothing to daunce  
Whan she the cause thereof/ did knowe/ under stode  
er blode was altere/ to here the ne sonde.

¶ Alba at the fyrst/ whan he hit  
assonped/ right fayre he dyd  
With weppng teares/ of tenderly p:  
And at the fyrst sight/ that he byor:  
He knewe well it was she/ but y<sup>e</sup>  
Her hert had suche distresse/  
For to remembre.

¶ Oke tyme the crown  
Byn selfe he  
As we lope  
As wisely on  
As no more ge  
Than is my son Maurice/ whi  
And if I be/ the se desche me

¶ Long lasted the sobbyng/ and intremper  
So that her wofull hert/ fro bitter teares  
Great pite it was/ to here them bothe cry  
Custa.



ye records all I pray / my labour to be done  
Theit wo I can nat shewe / noz halfe the cyrcūstāce  
I am so wery / to speke of wofull chance.

Shortly to conclude / whan she the certayne wylst  
That Alba gyltlesse was / of all her payne and wo  
An hundred tymes I trowe / eche of them other kyll  
And suche gladnesse / was made bytwene the two  
That laue I love anely / whiche neuer shall haue do  
But latter / ere is / none I hope may be sure  
me / whiche in lyfe may dur

percyue to the senators house /  
where as kynge Alba and his  
Custance was / and of the  
betwene  
Cap. rbi.

to the mehelp  
of payne  
stantly  
I hope  
come & dyne  
and pray  
in / one wo / be of me ye say.

me / wolde say the childe shau  
to relate / unto the Empour (rice  
I gesse / was nat so folys he nice





To hym that is the cheefe/ and heed of all honour  
 Aboue all earthly princes/ the fragrant flour  
 Wold sende for the any childe/ but best it is to deme  
 That he hym selfe went/ and so it might be seme.

Theprouer at the first/ did graunt most longly  
 To come to dyner/ as Alba hym besoughte  
 But feruently he behelde/ and looked busely  
 Upon the childe Maurice/ & on his thought thought  
 Home went kyng Alba/ and duple as he ought  
 Prepared for the feast/ of all that might suffice  
 By wisdom ordeed/ as he coude well deuise.

The dape appoynted cōe/ that Alba gan hym besee  
 And she his wife Custance/ the pious to piete  
 And right well besene/ they wouthe  
 But whan Custance sawe/ her father with strokes  
 Aboue the lighted/ and suckled at his sore  
 My father deere of the/ your pōn d  
 Is rased nowe full clene/ out

your daughter Custance/ w  
 Whiche long ago sent/ farre  
 She am I father/ whiche that the salte see  
 All alone was put/ and damped for to dye  
 Were father nowe the said/ I pray you hestely  
 Sende me no more forth/ so farre as hath me  
 But thake were my lord/ of all his great kyndnes

The part inwarde tope/ none can beclate it all  
 Witene the the made/ like they this tope be met  
 Custa. Fall. But



The .xviii.

But of this matter/ an ende nowe make I shall  
The tyme fast passeth/ and long processe hath let  
These glabrous people/ were vnto byner set  
And thus in tope and blyss/ at mete I let the dwell  
A thousande tymes better/ than any tong can tell.

Mauricius this childe/ was after Emperour  
Confirmed by the pope/ and lyued heruious ly  
Alway to holy church/ he may merited honour  
But all these stories/ I leaue and passe forth by  
A yill of Custance/ to speke/ purposed I  
Mauricius lyfe/ I beate nat well in mynde  
In the romayne letters/ his actes may ye fynde.

He the kynge's daughter departed from Rome with his  
wife Custance/ came home in to Englande:  
her father the kyng her husbande/ she  
remained in to Rome agayne/ where as she  
was a dayes/ amonge her pa-  
rents/ with great  
quietnesse.

The .xviii.

John Alba sawe his tyme/ wouten moze delay  
To leaue of the Emperour/ he toke for to departe  
With his wife Custance/ he caue the gaynest way  
To forgoe it vnto Englande/ where they were of her-  
uouse lyued/ but what wight may after  
the court of feruour/ for welth wyl nat abyde  
The chaunge as the mone/ mutable lyke y tyme  
what







1111.0 Lenuoy of Thomas Scotte.

I Go forth p[er]fectly: howe soeuer that thou be  
 Of mater & forme: in what day happen yet passed  
 Nothyng p[er]fectly: in what day happen yet passed  
 Of style & rhymer: in what day happen yet passed  
 But full of speche: in what day happen yet passed  
 And verses: in what day happen yet passed  
 Unto my minde: in what day happen yet passed  
 Belechig the which I shall: Though I be out of frae  
 Here of thy thame: in what day happen yet passed  
 And the in speciall: in what day happen yet passed  
 Which most are doctryne: For lay to the no blame  
 With wil dome decozate: But count it my folke  
 In science eleuate: in what day happen yet passed  
 And eche other estate: In that wherein as I am  
 To be content algate: Can nothing I byll truely  
 And nat to conspyrate: Haue made my selfe busy  
 Agaynst the any hate: For no cause els it was  
 Though I infatuate: But vacant tyme to pass  
 After this homely rate: Nat with intencion  
 Thy simple p[er]fesse wate: Of proude presumption  
 & where I dost repayre: But where as trasgressors  
 Allway behaue the fayre: By way of locution  
 Be nothyng in dispayre: Is made without reason  
 Thy selfe for to present: With humble subiaill  
 Though I be naked sent: Under correction  
 Without I freshe garnet: In the protection  
 Of termes eloquent: And wyse discrecion  
 But pondre myne entent: Of eche maner person  
 Say I right fayre I wol: Althing is said and don  
 Do better if I coude: And who so dothe the sa  
 Some men of graunte: Pray them to p[er]fume me

Finis









Thus endeth the Breuyar and shorte Legend  
of the saynt Dunstons the Em-  
perours daughter of Rome: Imprim-  
ted at London in Fleetstreete by  
Richard Iohnson printer  
to the sayntes noble  
grace dwelling  
before  
saynt Dunstons church.  
Cum prius  
legio.



1553



